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A War of Nerves Against Castro

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With the landings of anti-Castro infiltrators in Cuba—those accomplished and those still to come—a new phase begins in the struggle to regain for freedom the Soviet beachhead in the Caribbean. At least three groups are involved—the Revolutionary Junta headed by Manuel Ray, the Movement of Revolutionary Recovery headed by Manuel Artine, and a mixed group headed by Eloy Gutiérrez Menoya. I don't feel, as do some other anti-Castro Americans, that we must decide at this moment which of these three will give a liberated Cuba the best new regime. That decision will have to be made not in the U. S. but by the Cuban people, and it lies very far ahead.

Although I happen to like the social thinking of Manuel Ray, and am impressed by the support that Latin American "radical democrats" like Munoz Marin and Betancourt are giving him, I feel that the current competition between the groups is a healthy one. It shows that the opposition to Castro by exile Cubans is not narrow and sectarian but covers the whole spectrum of thinking, from liberal capitalism to left socialism. What ties the groups together is not a social dogma but a passion for national freedom. The hope is that inside Cuba they will get support in the end from the same spectrum of social thinking.

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I don't know how much connection, if any, the CIA has with any of these landings and infiltrations. But the State Department is being very careful to maintain a hands-off policy, and to emphasize that these are Cuban groups, with their own strategies and support, suffering their own dangers for their own stakes of freedom and nationalism. The absence of a government-in-exile, and of American recognition of it, helps the dissociation. Yet the American stake in the new phase is very great.

One hopes that the CIA has learned some of the hard lessons of the Bay of Pigs, and is a very much chastened outfit. One of the most moving books I have read for some time is "The Bay of Pigs", by Haynes Johnson (Norton), written in collaboration with Manuel Artine, Jose Perez San Roman and other leaders of Brigade 2506, who were the carriers and victims of one of history's saddest and maddest fiascos. I visited some of the Brigade leaders in Miami, and heard a small portion of

the total story told in this book. I don't see how anyone can help being stirred by them and their cause, nor help feeling dismayed in reading the record of bungling by the Joint Chiefs and of state-within-a-state meddling by the CIA agents.

There is no question now of mounting another invasion, large or small, which would only play into Castro's hands and unify Cuba behind him. The current phase has been described by Manuel Ray as one of creating a "revolutionary climate" by small landings and infiltrations into the silent opposition in Cuba, which will give that opposition hope and leadership and a voice and a guiding tactic of action.

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But we must distinguish between a "revolutionary climate" and what has been classically known as a "revolutionary situation." The materials for the "climate"—the willingness to think about revolt—are there: the desperate economic situation, described as such in every objective analysis of the Cuban economy that I have read, despite the large-scale aid from Russia; a shabby record in agriculture, after incredible bungling in planning decisions; the belt-tightening and hardships; the failure of Castro's too obvious efforts to woo America and persuade it to abandon the boycott; the tightening of the political situation in Latin America, especially the change in Brazil; the sense of a revolution betrayed that an unknown number of Cubans still have about Castro.

The materials are there, and the climate can be created out of them, if the infiltrators have skill and courage and will, as I am sure they do. But in Lenin's terms a "revolutionary situation" will not exist until the Communist rulers of Cuba are no longer able to rule, and the best of the young Cuban manhood is unwilling to be ruled. That will take time and anguish and blood. But it is not impossible.